



**Catawba County Public Health**  
[www.catawbacountync.gov/phealth](http://www.catawbacountync.gov/phealth)

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### **COUNTY SEEING UPTICK IN INFECTIOUS DIARRHEA; HANDWASHING, DISINFECTION URGED TO HALT SPREAD**

HICKORY – Catawba County Public Health has been seeing an increased number of cases of infectious diarrhea recently, and is asking the public to be vigilant about using thorough handwashing and disinfection, especially in homes with children. Parents are also asked to keep sick children at home from school or child care, especially if they have diarrhea.

“Frequent, thorough handwashing with soap and water is the most important thing families can do to prevent the spread of disease. This is true for many diseases that make the rounds this time of year, especially among children,” said Doug Urland, Director of Catawba County Public Health.

Handwashing should be performed at key times, such as after going to the bathroom, before preparing meals and before eating, and after changing a diaper.

This recommendation follows laboratory-confirmed cases of *Shigella*, a highly infectious disease that can cause severe diarrhea. Catawba County Public Health is working with child care providers and schools, along with physicians and state epidemiological experts to stop the spread in the community. Because it is highly contagious in school and child care settings, state leaders work with the local health department to assist with prompt intervention measures, which may help prevent the spread of *Shigella* to others. This uptick is similar to what is being seen in several other counties across the state.

Symptoms of *Shigella* include fever, abdominal cramps, chills, headache, body aches or diarrhea. It is important for parents, caregivers and educators to watch for potential symptoms in children and in other people in the home. Anyone with symptoms should stay home from school, child care and out of other group settings, and should not go to work, especially if they are in foodservice or healthcare settings. For kindergarten-age and younger children, it is recommended that parents take children with symptoms to their medical provider for evaluation and possible testing. Older children may return to school 48 hours after symptoms resolve.

“We will continue to closely monitor this situation and work with community partners and state epidemiology staff to stop the spread of *Shigella* in our community,” said Urland. “We are also depending on families to help these efforts by keeping sick children out of school or child care and to seek medical evaluation if they suspect an infection.”

As with other diseases, disinfection in the home can help stop the spread of illness among family members.

If you have questions, please contact your primary care provider or call Catawba County Public Health at (828) 695-5800. We have trained nurses who will be available to answer your questions.

*“Leading the Way to a Healthier Community”*



**Guidance to help parents prevent the spread of *Shigella* at home:**

- Carefully wash your hands with soap during key times:
  - Before eating.
  - After changing a diaper or helping to clean another person who has had a bowel movement.
- Anyone who changes diapers should be sure the diapers are disposed of properly in a closed-lid garbage can, and should wash his or her hands AND the child's hands carefully with soap and water immediately after changing the diapers. Any leaks or spills of diaper contents should be cleaned up immediately.
- To disinfect surfaces at home, including diaper changing areas and toilets, wipe them down with a bleach solution of 500-800ppm (¼ cup bleach mixed with one gallon of water or, for a smaller amount, mix 1 tablespoon of bleach with one quart of water).
- Steps for cleaning and disinfecting:
  - Clean the area with a mixture of detergent and water: scrub, wash, and rinse.
  - Cover the cleaned area with bleach solution.
  - Leave the solution to air dry at least 2 minutes.
  - Wipe dry or let it air dry completely.
- Toys must be cleaned and disinfected between uses by children who are likely to put them in their mouths.

Catawba County Public Health promotes and protects the health of all Catawba County residents through preventive services, innovative partnerships, and community health improvement initiatives. For more information, please call (828) 695-5800 or visit [www.catawbacountync.gov/phealth](http://www.catawbacountync.gov/phealth).

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